



News Release

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Contacts: Gordon MacCracken, Communications Office
Allison Cook, Communications Office

360-236-4072
360-236-4022

Power outages may increase risk of carbon monoxide poisoning

Don't burn charcoal or run gas-powered generators indoors

OLYMPIA — The winter storm has caused several power outages around the state, leading to concern that some people will use barbecue grills or gas generators for indoor heat. That's a big risk to families who could be sickened and even die from carbon monoxide poisoning.

It's crucial to use generators safely and never use them or charcoal burning devices indoors.

Carbon monoxide detectors provide additional protection, but don't replace prevention:

- Gas-powered generators should never be used indoors, and should be placed well away from open windows and vents.
- Charcoal briquettes should never be burned indoors for heat or cooking.
- Gas ovens should not be used as an indoor heat source, even for a short time.

"The importance of preventing carbon monoxide poisoning is too often shown with the sad news of people getting sick and even dying," said Secretary of Health Mary Selecky. "A carbon monoxide detector can help. Remember, if you have friends, family, or neighbors who are without power, be sure they're not burning charcoal or running a generator indoors."

Sources of carbon monoxide include blocked chimney flues and gas or kerosene heaters; never burn charcoal in a fireplace. An attached garage is a part of your home. Carbon monoxide fumes can seep-in from generators or idling cars, so don't run either of them in the garage.

Carbon monoxide is a poisonous gas that cannot be seen or smelled and can kill a person in minutes. Carbon monoxide is produced whenever any fuel such as gas, oil, kerosene, wood, or charcoal is burned. Hundreds of people die accidentally every year from carbon monoxide poisoning caused by appliances that are not used properly or that are malfunctioning. Carbon monoxide can build up so quickly that victims are overcome before they can get help.

— More —

Once inhaled, carbon monoxide can cause permanent brain damage, chest pains or heart attacks. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include headache, weakness, dizziness, confusion, fatigue, and nausea.

The health department is working with the state Emergency Operations Center to distribute informational materials in affected areas. At flu vaccination clinics held at retailers around the state last weekend, the state Department of Health handed-out thousands of fact sheets about [preventing carbon monoxide poisoning](#). That information is also available on [the agency's home page](#) (www.doh.wa.gov).

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Visit the Washington Department of Health website at http://www.doh.wa.gov for <i>a healthy dose of information</i> .
